

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
 OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:

ETHAN ALLEN CAPSIZING  
 LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK  
 OCTOBER 2, 2005

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 \* Docket No.: DCA-06-MM-001  
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Interview of: DR. GERALD THORNELL

National Transportation Safety Board  
 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20594

Thursday,  
 November 10, 2005

The above-captioned matter convened, via telephone,  
 pursuant to notice, at 1:00 p.m.

BEFORE: MORGAN TURRELL

## APPEARANCES:

MORGAN TURRELL

National Transportation Safety Board

LEON LaRUE

National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:00 p.m.)

1 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Today is November 10, 2005.

2  
3 It's 1:00 p.m. Eastern, and we're talking to Professor Gerald  
4 Thornell.  
5

6 My name is Morgan Turrell of the NTSB and to my right  
7 is.

8 MR. LaRUE: Leon LaRue (ph.), NTSB.

9 MR. TURRELL: And we are conducting an investigation  
10 on the Ethan Allen tragedy on Lake George, New York, on October  
11 2nd.

12 And, Dr. Thornell, if you would introduce yourself,  
13 spell your name, first name and last name?

14 DR. THORNELL: My name is Gerald Thornell,  
15 G E R A L D, Thornell, T H O R N E L L.

16 MR. TURRELL: And, sir, what is your occupation?

17 DR. THORNELL: I have sort of a dual occupation, one  
18 being a Professor at the University System in Massachusetts,  
19 and secondly, running a health and safety consulting business.

20 MR. TURRELL: And, Dr. Thornell, would you please  
21 acknowledge this is being recorded for the public record?

22 DR. THORNELL: Yes.

23 INTERVIEW OF DR. GERALD THORNELL

24 BY MR. TURRELL:

25 Q. And, sir, can you give us a brief background,

1 professional history of yourself?

2 A. Well, yes, I can. In reference to maybe the area  
3 that we're speaking to today, I, for a number of years,  
4 somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 some odd, had a trade pilot  
5 and engineer's license on public vessels in the State of New  
6 York for 10 tons and less. I served in the State Navigation  
7 Department in New York State for I believe for five summers,  
8 five seasons rather as a Navigation Officer, primarily on Lake  
9 George, and I served as a Warren County Navigation Officer in  
10 Warren County for several years, and had jurisdiction in all of  
11 Warren County and somewhat of it, probably 50 percent of it on  
12 Lake George. My professional background is that I'm a  
13 Professor of Education. I hold a doctorate in that area, and I  
14 have been at Bridgewater State College for 35 years and -- what  
15 else? I guess that would be it.

16 Q. Okay. If you could just talk to us a little bit more  
17 about the -- your duties on Lake George. You mentioned your  
18 State navigation duties and if you'd go into more detail about  
19 those, those jobs?

20 A. Yes. During the time that I served as a Navigation  
21 Officer for New York, State of New York and on Lake George, I  
22 was with the division which at that point was referred to as  
23 the Lake George Park Commission which I believe is still the  
24 existing agency.

25 Q. Yes.

1           A.    And it was a patrol capacity.  I did all kinds of  
2  patrol in terms of being either day or night.  I had a  
3  distinction, I guess, of having to do the 6:00 p.m. to 2:00  
4  a.m. patrol several summers on the Lake which was kind of  
5  interesting.

6           Q.    I'm sure.

7           A.    I -- in that capacity, you dealt with everything from  
8  the minor violations of navigation law to the more tragic  
9  scenes that happened.  When I say tragic scenes, I'm preferring  
10 primarily to single incidents, drownings, boating accidents and  
11 such, and doing the investigation on those, and also trying to  
12 obviously enforce the laws of New York State, and particularly  
13 and superseding some of the laws of the Lake George Park  
14 Commission.

15          Q.    Okay.  And then you also worked for Warren County?

16          A.    I did.  Warren County Sheriff's Department had a  
17 navigational division and I would say the duties were very  
18 similar as I described about the Lake George Park Commission,  
19 similar in the respect that you were working for a, you know,  
20 "police" agency, enforcing regulations and laws of New York  
21 State.  The variation of that would be that my capacity in the  
22 Sheriff's Department took me to other lakes and other districts  
23 within Warren County which is a relatively large county and  
24 containing many, many navigable waters.

25          Q.    Okay.

1           A.    And, of course, the reason that I was involved in  
2   both of those is that I had spent a number of years as -- with  
3   a public vessel operation, with a resort on Lake George, and  
4   had worked there all through essentially high school, graduate  
5   school and beyond.

6           Q.    Okay. Can you give us the rough time periods, the  
7   years that you worked at these two agencies?

8           A.    Well, it is somewhat dated in the sense that I  
9   started with the Park Commission I believe it to be, and I'm  
10   not 100 percent sure of this, but I believe it was 1971 through  
11   '77.

12          Q.    Okay.

13          A.    And the Sheriff's Department goes back to the late  
14   sixties, '68 I believe, '68 through '70.

15          Q.    Uh-huh.

16          A.    And prior to that -- I must also tell you that  
17   simultaneously I was also a -- just a glutton for punishment I  
18   guess, I was a police officer in the Town of Lake George at  
19   that time, too, in the summers in the evening.

20          Q.    Okay.

21          A.    And also did sometime as a police officer in the Town  
22   of Bolton.

23          Q.    Uh-huh.

24          A.    My experience in terms of a public vessel license, I  
25   believe I got my first public vessel license in about 1961, and

1 kept that active through the mid nineties.

2 Q. And which license did you hold there?

3 A. I held the joint pilot and engineer's license, the  
4 10-ton vessel.

5 Q. Did you ever work as a commercial mariner on the Lake  
6 other than your police duties?

7 A. I'm sorry. I didn't quite understand that.

8 Q. Did you work as a commercial mariner like for one of  
9 these --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- local operators?

12 A. Well, I worked for a resort that offered tour rides,  
13 and I -- that's where I exercised my operation with the public  
14 vessel license.

15 Q. And was that Sagamore or --

16 A. No, it was at Canoe Island Lodge in Diamond Point,  
17 operating a, you know, many various boats but primarily under  
18 30 feet --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- you know, with capacities in the mid twenties.

21 Q. Okay. Well, we'll probably go back and ask some  
22 questions about that but let's just go ahead and, and go ahead  
23 tell us what you know about the accident on October 2nd or  
24 whatever you can provide, whatever knowledge you have?

25 A. Well, going back to maybe October 1st --



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- the recollection of that weekend was, it was an  
3 exceptionally nice weekend.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. It didn't appear to start out that way but by  
6 Saturday, it had really turned out to be a really nice weekend.  
7 And we did a bit of boating on the Lake on Saturday and, you  
8 know, that was fine. I will say that the only event on  
9 Saturday was that we did see, and I would have to say honestly  
10 I can't tell you whether it was the Ethan Allen or the de  
11 Champlain, from a distance, and a person upon my boat said, my,  
12 that boat rides low in the water. It was the only comment and  
13 I passed it off as nothing at the time, thinking that I've seen  
14 this boat for a number of years riding in the water and, I  
15 don't know, I glanced at it, but it didn't register to me that  
16 it was -- or I wasn't agreeing or disagreeing with that  
17 comment. It was just a passing comment. That night, our home  
18 on the Lake overlooks the Lake from quite a panoramic view, and  
19 we did notice the boat coming up the Lake. Again, it was dark  
20 but it was relatively early. At that time of the year, it  
21 could have been 7:30, quarter of 8:00. It was dark but we  
22 noticed that it was lighted coming up and again from that  
23 distance, I don't know which one of the two of them it was, but  
24 it was one of them, and I remember a comment made that we don't  
25 normally see the boat up that far at night, end of comment.

1 The next day, Sunday, we had sailed early in the day, but gave  
2 up the sailing because frankly there wasn't any wind, and it  
3 wasn't a whole lot of fun.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So we put that away. We had seen the boat that  
6 morning at the dock, you know, just passing by and because I  
7 was cruising that area, and had just seen it but didn't pay a  
8 whole lot of attention to it. I received a call, oh, maybe at  
9 4:00 on Sunday afternoon from a person who knew that I was in  
10 the area and said something to the effect of, do you know about  
11 what's happened in the Village, and I said, no, I don't but I  
12 can tell you something's happening because there's an  
13 unbelievable amount of traffic heading south on the Lake  
14 because we could certainly see that. And this person said I'm  
15 understanding that the Ethan Allen went down, and there, you  
16 know, there are people in the water and so on. And he said to  
17 me, you ought to go down. Maybe you could be helpful.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And I immediately responded, well, sure, if I think I  
20 can be of any help, I will, but I wasn't going to do this by  
21 boat because -- so I drove down to the scene, and arrived there  
22 during the unfortunate time when they were retrieving bodies  
23 and also retrieving survivors from the water. And a gentleman  
24 approached me and just asked me a few questions about the Lake.  
25 He asked me things that were -- such as did I know very much

1 about Lake George, how long was it, how deep was it and how  
2 wide was it, and I had these answers and he, at that point,  
3 said to me, how do you know this, and I said to him, well,  
4 having years of experience on this Lake, I think I've been on  
5 the Lake 50 years and I also -- and then I told him I had been  
6 a Navigation Officer, and I had been a public vessel operator  
7 and he said, oh, that's very interesting, and he said, by the  
8 way, my name is -- and I do not remember his name and I'm with  
9 the Associated Press. Then he said, what do you think was  
10 going on? I said, well, I can only tell you that it was about  
11 as calm as it ever gets here. Certainly the weather can't be a  
12 factor in this, in my view, at that point, and I said, I would  
13 doubt that any waves of any boat would ever do this, but that  
14 was kind of the end of my comment to that person, and  
15 subsequently I stayed there a considerable amount of time. I  
16 wasn't really much help except that I was aware of what was  
17 going on, and I directed some people to where things were  
18 happening because I still have fairly good relationships with a  
19 lot of those people on the departments and such. That night,  
20 at 2:00 in the morning, I got a phone call which totally  
21 surprised me, it happened to be on my cell phone, and it  
22 awakened me obviously at 2:00 in the morning, and this voice  
23 said that she was Mary somebody from Fox News and could I do an  
24 interview? And I'm sure you can understand I'm lying in bed  
25 thinking, what the hell is this all about, and I said, me, what

1 are you talking to me for? And she said, are you Gerry  
2 Thornell, and I said, yeah. And I said to her, well, how did  
3 you get my name? And she said, are you kidding? She said it's  
4 all over the place, quotes that you made. And I said, sure,  
5 I'd love to do an interview with you but not at 2:00 in the  
6 morning, I don't think so. So subsequently I did try to meet  
7 up with her the next day or her reporters. That did not work  
8 but a CNN person did approach me and ask me again a bunch of  
9 questions and then asked me if I would participate with your  
10 Chairman on the Wolf Blitzer show, The Situation Room --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. -- which I did for approximately 45 minutes answering  
13 again some general questions about the Lake and about  
14 navigation law in general.

15 Q. Uh-huh.

16 A. I can recall that Wolf Blitzer asked in my view some,  
17 you know, I don't know, just not very accurate questions about  
18 aren't you surprised that not everybody was wearing a life  
19 jacket and aren't you surprised and, of course, my answers  
20 were, you know, I wasn't surprised and the tour boats, people  
21 don't put their life jackets on as they board the boat. I  
22 tried to be diplomatic but yet giving him, you know, the  
23 straight answers to that.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. Beyond that, some of my discussions with I believe

1 your Chair in a subsequent conversation were, you know, what I  
2 felt from what I could see knowing that Lake, and knowing that  
3 particular area where it went down, that I would have had a  
4 theory about possible causes, and I shared that theory.

5 Q. Okay. And what, what -- what's your theory there,  
6 Gerald?

7 A. Well, the theory that I had was that -- it's not an  
8 original theory by this point. You've heard it over and over  
9 again. I know from the years from operating a public vessel,  
10 that as you get to that area in the Lake, you want to point out  
11 a particular home. I don't know that he did that Sunday but if  
12 he knows the Lake, if the Captain knew the Lake as well as I  
13 think he does, he would more than likely have done that. The  
14 home happened to belong to Harold Pitcairn, who at one point  
15 was the President of Pittsburgh Plate Glass, and he invented  
16 the autogyro. That's a pretty spectacular house. It sits  
17 pretty high up on the hill there.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. And in order to see it, with a boat with a canopy on  
20 it, you wouldn't be able to just look at it as if you would in  
21 an open boat. You'd have to sort of bend and go underneath the  
22 canopy to look up at that angle of the hill. My suspicion is  
23 that that's exactly what was going on because he would be  
24 turning about right there, and that the boat was turning and  
25 people were moving in that direction, if you will and

1 sliding -- not sliding so much as leaning in that area, that I  
2 think the combination of, you know, physics of leaning  
3 overweight -- overweighted in terms of passenger capacity --

4 Q. Uh-huh.

5 A. -- not numbers but weight --

6 Q. Right.

7 A. -- that the freak accident is that it just caught up  
8 to them, and all the physics were wrong on that particular  
9 moment and it swamped. You know, I know enough to know that we  
10 had a similar boat to that that was open, and we added a canopy  
11 very similar to that. It just happened to be a 28 foot boat.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. And it changed the dynamics of that boat and the  
14 maneuverability of that boat so much by putting that canopy on  
15 top, which was a wood and fiberglass canopy, and I don't  
16 remember the weight, but it certainly changed the  
17 characteristics of that boat enough so that the handling  
18 capacities were very much affected by it.

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. And that's what I -- that's kind of my thought  
21 process in reference to how this tragedy happened.

22 Q. Now that house you're talking about, is that the one  
23 way up on the hillside there that's -- you barely -- I mean  
24 it's not right on the waterfront. It's way up in the hills.

25 A. No, no, no. It's on the waterfront.

1 Q. It is on the waterfront.

2 A. Oh, yeah. It's just -- you're familiar with the site  
3 where the boat went down, right?

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. Just slightly north of that, it's in the next bay --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- which is Green Harbor.

8 Q. Green Harbor.

9 A. Okay. The house that sits right there at the  
10 entrance to Green Harbor.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. It's a spectacular place.

13 Q. All right. I just have a question, since you know  
14 the Lake so well and, and -- are you familiar with any  
15 obstructions either underwater or like, for lack of a better  
16 word, any reefs or --

17 A. You know, I would have to say this. Lake George is,  
18 in my view, as well marked as any navigable water in the State  
19 of New York or anywhere else I've ever been. I think that they  
20 have done an extraordinary job, primarily the Lake George  
21 Association and then later the Lake George Park Commission, in  
22 identifying hazards. In the number of years that I have driven  
23 in that exact same area and have piloted over there, I have  
24 never been aware that there was anything.

25 Q. Okay. No, I didn't think, but I just want to get

1 you, since you know the Lake so well, I wanted to get that  
2 straight from you. So -- we didn't think so either.

3 A. No.

4 Q. Let me just go back here. Do you know -- have a  
5 personal relationship with or know the Captain, Richard Paris?

6 A. The only relationship I ever had was that I knew of  
7 him as a State Trooper, when he was an active Trooper, because  
8 again my history there is quite antiqued also, and he was an  
9 active Trooper at the time that I was working.

10 Q. Right. And he was on the Lake at the time?

11 A. No, I never remember him as being a Lake person. I  
12 remember him as being a Trooper assigned to that area.

13 Q. Road duty?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And I had very limited -- at least in terms of  
17 recall, I can't recall any action I ever had with him.

18 Q. And the Sheriff was Larry Cleveland?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Did you have a relationship with Larry Cleveland at  
21 all?

22 A. Is that you or me?

23 Q. That's me. Go ahead.

24 A. My relationship with Larry Cleveland has been  
25 certainly after I had ever left the department. He was, he was



1 not in the department when I was there.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. No.

4 Q. And the Quirks, the Seaport -- not the Seaport Taxi,  
5 but the Shoreline Cruises, any relationship with them?

6 A. No. My experience was primarily with the other side  
7 if you will, the Bill Dow side.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And, you know, the Mohican and what used to be, of  
10 course, the Ticonderoga, the Minne-Ha-Ha and those boats, but I  
11 certainly know about Shoreline Cruises and frankly have been,  
12 you know, aboard them. After the accident, I was questioning  
13 if one of their boats, one of the larger ones, was made by  
14 Scarano Brothers in Albany.

15 Q. Right.

16 A. If that is the case, then I'd have something to say  
17 about it, but I couldn't remember if it did or not, if they did  
18 make the Adirondac or the Horicon.

19 Q. I believe they did.

20 A. Well, in my other role in the world of safety and  
21 health consultant, my safety and health consulting business has  
22 been primarily in marine business.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. And I can just tell you, I was never, never impressed  
25 with anything I saw at Scarano as far as boat building and

1 procedures that they, that they used. And a good friend of  
2 mine had built sailboats there, and I still had that same  
3 feeling about them, that they just didn't seem to get it.

4 Q. When you say procedures, what kind of procedures are  
5 you referring to?

6 A. Well, you know, from my point of view when I would go  
7 into a mariner, I would be looking at safety procedures in  
8 terms of if they're putting on glass, are the people using the  
9 right respirators, are they using acetone correctly, are they  
10 molding up correctly, are they waiting and setting and so on.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. And I always had issues there that they were never  
13 paying much attention to the rules and regulations.

14 Q. From a safety and health standpoint?

15 A. Yes. You see, you know, these mom and pop boat  
16 operations around the country tend to get away with an awful  
17 lot because they are mom and pop operations.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. And I've just written an article for Professional  
20 Boat Builders that sort of addresses that.

21 Q. Now the Quirk family, do you have any relationship  
22 with them?

23 A. No, no. None whatsoever.

24 Q. The home that you -- where you reside --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- where I believe you said you saw the --

2 A. Uh-huh.

3 Q. -- can you describe where that is?

4 A. Sure.

5 Q. Not the address, just kind of general terms on the  
6 record.

7 A. It overlooks Basin Bay.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. It has -- I don't mean this in a bragging way,  
10 probably the best view of Lake George that you could ever  
11 imagine.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. North and south.

14 Q. Uh-huh. And so that's north of the accident site?

15 A. Yes, it is.

16 Q. Okay. You mentioned the night before, Saturday or  
17 Saturday afternoon, you saw one of the two boats go by, the  
18 Ethan Allen or the de Champlain or that one of your guests had  
19 said that they thought the boat was riding differently or too  
20 low?

21 A. That was earlier in the day on Saturday. We were out  
22 on the Lake and somebody spotted it and said that they thought  
23 it looked low or something like that. I said why does that  
24 boat appear to be so low? And as I said, I gave it a glance  
25 and didn't, didn't response to that comment because I really

1 didn't notice I guess that it was particularly low. They do  
2 look low in the water. You've seen the boat. You know what I  
3 mean. It is a relatively low boat. If you compare that, if  
4 you think that maybe Mohican was the last boat that went by,  
5 you would look at the Mohican and say, now that's a tour boat  
6 and then one of these two boats would go by, and you'd say, is  
7 that a tour boat?

8 Q. Right.

9 A. So there was a question about that. The comment --  
10 the other comment was at night, when it was dark and well  
11 lighted, that it had been that far north, and we just never --  
12 I won't say we never, but it was rarely did we see one of those  
13 two boats that far north.

14 Q. Now when the person described the boat as low in the  
15 water, was he describing it as a -- low in the bow or did it  
16 lift or just overall low, or did you not get an impression  
17 either way?

18 A. My impression was that the person who said that to me  
19 thought it was riding low bow depth, that the bow was digging  
20 in --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- as opposed to, you know, planing or anything like  
23 that.

24 Q. Okay. That's good. And your time on the Lake, can  
25 you describe the interaction between the, the Lake George

1 Steamboat Company, the Mohican in particular, and other vessels  
2 on the Lake?

3 A. My experience with them in terms of -- I always  
4 thought that the relationship was compatible, and that they  
5 were very good about watching out for one another. They had a  
6 group of captains that had been aboard the Mohican and the  
7 Ticonderoga which was their mother ship for a long time, that  
8 were very professional and were with them for a number of  
9 years. The only incident I ever recall, and I was surprised  
10 that this was never mentioned in the paper was that one night  
11 the Mohican went aground up in the Narrows, one Saturday night.  
12 It was a dance, a dance cruise, and it was loaded -- it  
13 probably had 300 some odd people aboard, and it did run aground  
14 and people had to leave the boat and because it ran aground in  
15 the Narrows, they eventually ended up blocking the shore. But  
16 that was -- I can't recall when that happened. I would say --  
17 I know I was on duty that night, and I would say it was in the  
18 mid seventies or something.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. But in terms of, you know, I can honestly say the  
21 Mohican's wake, for many years, was always a concern. The  
22 people would try to get out of its way or they say, oh, come  
23 on, if we're water skiing let's move because here comes the  
24 Mohican. It did have a pretty good size wake on it, and so  
25 they modified it somewhere in the eighties, and it didn't seem

1 to have quite as sharp a wake as it previously did, but I  
2 certainly have never had anything, in my view out there, I  
3 never had a canoe that would tip over and essentially blame it  
4 on the Mohican's wake.

5 Q. So in your time, both at Lake George and the Warren  
6 County Sheriff on the water, which probably spans how many  
7 years of service? Fifteen years.

8 A. Yeah, something like that.

9 Q. You've never experienced like you mentioned, a canoe  
10 overturning as a result of the wake from the Mohican. Is that  
11 right?

12 A. Not to my knowledge. You know, canoes overturn --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. -- and typically it's the inappropriate operation of  
15 the canoe and sometimes it's an ego think for a canoe operator  
16 to say, you know, I was paddling along and this boat went over  
17 and tipped me over --

18 Q. Uh-huh.

19 A. -- which when you get there, you find out he was  
20 sitting in the back of the canoe, you know, by himself or  
21 something, and he weighs 220 pounds and the front end of the  
22 canoe is 3 feet in the air, and he's wondering why he tipped  
23 over.

24 Q. But to your knowledge, as a law enforcement issue, it  
25 was never attributed to --

1 A. No.

2 Q. And let me ask you another question here. You  
3 mentioned you had a sailboat. Is that correct?

4 A. I'm sorry.

5 Q. You have a sailboat. Is that right?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Can you describe the sailboat to us?

8 A. Well, sure. It's 20 -- well, by class -- do you know  
9 the class of Rainbow?

10 Q. Rainbow. Sure.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And that's a, you know, Marconi rig sloop with a --  
14 it draws about 27 inches.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. With an 800 pound keel.

17 Q. Okay. And I don't think I asked you if you had a  
18 relationship with Bill Dow and those folks who were there at  
19 Lake George?

20 A. Uh-huh.

21 Q. Did you have any personal relationship with those  
22 folks?

23 A. I know them. I've known young Bill for years, his  
24 father, his sister, but -- no.

25 Q. Professional capacity?

1           A.    Yeah, professional capacity.

2           Q.    Okay.  Now in your time on the Lake, do you recall  
3 any problems or issues with Shoreline as far as any incidents  
4 you responded to, any problems with Shoreline Cruises at all?

5           A.    No.

6           Q.    And, and as far as, do you have an option or an  
7 opportunity to inspect or board their vessels in a law  
8 enforcement capacity?

9           A.    I would hate to say to you that this is the truth,  
10 but I think it is, that rarely did an officer from the Lake  
11 George Park Commission or the Sheriff's Department ever feel  
12 that they could inspect a passenger ship under way.

13          Q.    Sure, sure, and that's -- to your knowledge, the  
14 appropriate law enforcement group for that would be, would be  
15 who?

16          A.    I would say the majority of that would happen with  
17 the New York State Navigation Department when they came to  
18 inspect --

19          Q.    Right.

20          A.    -- those public vessels.

21          Q.    That's correct I'm sure.  And they are part of our  
22 investigation as is Shoreline Cruises and Warren County  
23 Sheriff.

24          A.    Uh-huh.

25          Q.    That's all I have right now.



1           MR. TURRELL: Leon LaRue is going to ask you a couple  
2 of questions there, Doctor.

3           BY MR. LaRUE:

4           Q. Okay. Gerald, Leon LaRue, NTSB. Back on the  
5 Saturday, October 1st, you said your friend, you know, noticed  
6 the boat possibly riding low in the water. Do you remember  
7 seeing how many people were on board at the time? Do you  
8 remember noticing that at all?

9           A. On board what?

10          Q. On board either the Ethan Allen or the de Champlain,  
11 whichever one it was.

12          A. No, I certainly wasn't -- it wasn't one of those  
13 things where you were counting them, but I can only remember  
14 that because of the weather, it would have been an attractive  
15 day to be out there on Saturday. So whether that means that  
16 they had 25 people on board or 35, I don't know. It didn't  
17 look -- my recollection of it was it wasn't remarkable one way  
18 or the other.

19          Q. Okay. Great. Now you mentioned that you had been on  
20 some of the Shoreline Cruises boats?

21          A. Uh-huh.

22          Q. Which ones had you been on?

23          A. I think I had been both the Horicon and the  
24 Adirondac. I don't think I have ever been on either of the  
25 smaller boats.

1 Q. Okay.

2 MR. LaRUE: That's all the questions I've got.

3 BY MR. TURRELL:

4 Q. Gerald, did this spur any -- anything, any further  
5 comments you'd like to add to this?

6 A. Well, my comments would be that obviously, you know,  
7 for the number of years that I was on there, having dealt with  
8 some single tragedies, to witness that one or to witness the  
9 results of that one, was a pretty traumatic event. I've never  
10 seen 20 people lined up on a front lawn before like that.

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. Nor do I ever want to see it again, but it was  
13 just -- I just think it was an exceptionally sad event  
14 primarily because of, you know, the age and such a beautiful  
15 day to end up like that. It's certainly not what you think  
16 about when you think of Lake George. You know, obviously I've  
17 had a respect for that Lake for a number of years, but it's  
18 such a beautiful -- and that was such a beautiful day to end  
19 like that, that was just horrible.

20 Q. Gerald, would you just elaborate on the conditions  
21 that Sunday on the Lake?

22 A. That afternoon on the Lake was, and I don't want to  
23 say I'm accurate about this, but I think I am because we have a  
24 lot of equipment at the house for monitoring the weather, since  
25 we're kind of -- I don't want to say we're weather freaks, but

1 spending limited time there, we always like to know what's  
2 going on, and the wind was less than five miles an hour. It  
3 was three something all day. It was exceptionally sunny, and  
4 it was so calm that I remember remarking at about 1:00 in the  
5 afternoon, standing on the deck having lunch, I said to the  
6 group, I said, look at this, you can see the reflection of the  
7 mountain on the other side in the Lake. So the Lake has to be  
8 almost dead calm for that to happen, you know.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. And it was that, it was that calm. It was about 64  
11 degrees.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. And it was a very exceptional day for October 2nd.

14 Q. Right. Now from your vantage point, Sunday, you said  
15 you were -- I think you said you were on the Lake briefly in  
16 your sailboat?

17 A. Yeah, briefly in the morning, but there was no, no  
18 wind. So we gave up on that.

19 Q. And what time did you give up and tie your boat up?

20 A. Oh, gosh.

21 Q. Roughly.

22 A. 10:00.

23 Q. 10:00. And then from there you did what?

24 A. That day -- let's see. We didn't power -- we didn't  
25 take -- we rented a powerboat on that day or were we? Yes, we

1 did. We did. We had just taken a quick run. I had guests who  
2 had never seen the Village by water, and we drove down to the  
3 Village, just took a spin around and came back up, and that's  
4 when -- I think I said earlier, that I had seen the boat at  
5 dark earlier in the day, that would have been Sunday.

6 Q. Right. Did you see any of the other Shoreline boats  
7 out that morning at the time you --

8 A. I don't recall. I don't recall seeing anybody else.

9 Q. Okay. And the Mohican, do you recall seeing it on  
10 that afternoon?

11 A. Yes, I did see the Mohican in the afternoon because  
12 they come right by us.

13 Q. Sure. Do you recall what time that was?

14 A. Oh, gosh. It must have been the Paradise Bay cruise.  
15 So it was probably 2:00 or so when it went by. I wouldn't want  
16 to be held to that but it was early afternoon. Yeah.

17 Q. Early afternoon.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And any other boats, the Horicon or any of the other  
20 vessels, the Adirondac or --

21 A. You know --

22 Q. -- Minne or one of those?

23 A. I, I can't say that I absolutely recall seeing any of  
24 them. I mean it's just a typical cruising time that, you know,  
25 we know what time these boats go by, whether we noticed them

1   that day or not, I don't know. I know the Morgan was out from  
2   the Sagamore because we kind of watched that go out at lunch  
3   and do their little lunch cruise.

4       Q.    Right.

5       A.    But I can't recall seeing, and I'm not saying they  
6   weren't there. I just don't recall.

7       Q.    Okay.

8           MR. TURRELL: Well, I think I'm satisfied, and Leon's  
9   got no more questions. We'll keep your number handy. If  
10  anything else comes up there, Professor, we'll send an e-mail  
11  and set up another chat but I think I've got enough for now.

12          DR. THORNELL: Uh-huh.

13          MR. TURRELL: And I really appreciate you contacting  
14  us and getting, you know, we -- oftentimes you get on scene,  
15  and CNN and everybody else gets a hold of people and -- but as  
16  far as the federal investigation, we're the ones that -- and  
17  we're really happy to talk to you about it.

18          DR. THORNELL: Are we still being recorded?

19          MR. TURRELL: Yes, we are. So I'm just going to ask  
20  you to acknowledge that it's been recorded, and I'll shut the  
21  machine off.

22          DR. THORNELL: Okay. Please.

23          MR. TURRELL: Thank you.

24           (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled  
25  matter was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           Ethan Allen Capsizing  
                                  Lake George, New York  
                                  October 2, 2005  
                                  Interview of Dr. Gerald Thornell

DOCKET NUMBER:           DCA-06-MM-001

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DATE:                     November 10, 2005

was held according to the record, and that this is the  
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been  
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

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Kathryn A. Mirfin  
Transcriber